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**Daily News (Bowling Green, KY)**

## **Agricultural diversity continues to unfold in Kentucky \$1.5 million in funding has been approved for projects across the state**

ROBYN L. MINOR, The Daily News, [rminor@bgdailynews.com](mailto:rminor@bgdailynews.com)/783-3249

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Kentucky continues to invest millions in diversifying its agriculture markets, and some of those investments are paying off.

This month, the Kentucky **Agricultural** Development Board approved funding for nearly \$1.5 million for projects across the state, including in Warren County.

Since January 2001, when the program was founded using tobacco settlement funds, more than \$265 million has been distributed for ag-related programs.

The Logan County dairy owned and operated by the Willis and Edna Schrock family was the beneficiary of a nearly half million dollar forgivable loan in November.

The Schrocks are installing their new equipment this week and it should be up and running by Aug. 5, with the ability to produce a variety of products. Now they mostly sell whole milk in old-fashioned glass bottles under the label Rebekah Grace.

The Schrocks did have plans to sell their milk to Kroger for its Private Select label but Edna Schrock said that fell through when Kroger experienced problems with glass bottles it used from another company on the East Coast.

Dealing with empty glass bottles also was proving to be an issue for such a large store, she said.

Now the Schrocks are planning on bottling some of their milk in clear sturdy plastic that will have the look of a glass bottle. Edna Schrock said she hopes Kroger will give them another look once that happens.

But they won't abandon glass markets.

"There is a niche market for those," she said.

Also when the new production lines are installed, they will be supplying all the milk for the University of Kentucky campus under the Rebekah Grace label.

Locally, their milk can be found at the Bowling Green farmers market off U.S. 31-W By-Pass from 7 a.m. to noon and at the Fatted Calf on U.S. 31-W By-Pass as well as Country Side Bakery in Auburn. The milk is also in stores in Louisville and Lexington.

Edna Schrock said when they start producing 1 percent milk, low-fat chocolate milk and other items, probably the first place they will be available locally is at the farmers market.

Bowling Green businessman Sam Lawson, a member of the board that approves such projects, said the Schrocks' project will hopefully serve as a model for others in the state.

"Once this gets up and running and we see that it is a success, we can take the

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information and apply it elsewhere in the state," Lawson said.

"We try to identify the projects that have merit and anything that points toward value added is," he said. "Back when Bill Ray (Smith of Bowling Green) was agriculture commissioner, all he talked about was getting the farmer closer to the supper table."

The state has been moving closer to that with its Kentucky Proud program, which markets agriculture products to retailers.

Sen. Joey Pendleton, D-Hopkinsville, is on the legislative oversight board for the development board.

"I think it is just like anything," he said. "We've had some great success stories and some that haven't been so good, but that's what made us stronger."

"Look now what we've done with the tourism part of agriculture, with wineries all over the state and the ethanol plan in Hopkinsville that has been a big success," he said. "The cattle genetics program has made the biggest improvement for farmers as has the cattle-handling facilities program."

In the latest round of funding, Edmonson County Cattleman Association received \$55,000 to administer funding for Cattle Genetics Improvement, Cattle Handling Facilities, Dairy Diversification, Goat and Sheep Diversification and Hay, Straw, and Commodity Storage projects.

The association received \$40,000 in additional funding for poultry and other related projects.

Hart County Goat Producers received \$50,000 to continue its goat and sheep diversification programs. Hart County also received \$95,000 for forage improvement projects.

Warren County received \$55,000 for various programs and Logan County received \$30,000.

Since January, Warren County has received a total of \$201,000. Other counties and their totals:

Allen County \$242,000; Barren County \$500,572; Butler County \$34,500; Edmonson County \$141,500; Logan County \$128,700; and Simpson County \$121,700.

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